MITLENATCH ISLAND NATURE PROVINCIAL PARK

PURPOSE STATEMENT AND ZONING PLAN

March 2003

Approved by:

Dick Heath
Regional Manager
Environmental Stewardship Division

Date: March 25/03

Nancy Wilkin
Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

Date: Mar 31/03

MITLENATCH ISLAND NATURE PROVINCIAL PARK
Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan

Primary Role

The **primary** role of Mitlenatch Island Nature Park is to protect a unique island ecosystem and its special natural features. The 155-hectare park (36 ha upland and 119 ha foreshore) contains the second largest seabird nesting colony in the Strait of Georgia as well as many rare plant and animal species. Predominant nesting bird species (in decreasing order) include glaucous-winged gulls (more than 3,000 pairs), pelagic cormorants, double-crested cormorants, pigeon guillemots, northwestern crows, black oystercatchers and rhinocerous auklets. The island also serves as an important moulting site for post-breeding harlequin ducks and as foraging habitat during the summer for as many as 300 marbled murrelets, a nationally threatened species. Over 160 species of birds have been recorded to date on Mitlenatch.

Being in the rain shadow of Vancouver Island, the island has a low annual rainfall (less than 75 cm). This dry hot environment has resulted in the park being home to many sun-loving plants. Over 210 vascular plants have been recorded, including many red and blue-listed species and a sizable grove of trembling aspen which is an unusual feature on the coast. The island also has some of British Columbia's largest garter snakes.

Located on its own in the northern part of the Strait of Georgia, Mitlenatch Island is the point where tides flowing from the north and south ends of Vancouver Island meet, which increases the biological richness of the surrounding waters and provides food for seabirds and marine mammals. The park protects all sedentary marine life, including abalones, oysters, scallops and sea cucumbers in a 300 metre-wide band of foreshore, where collecting is not permitted. It also protects numerous haulouts for harbour seals and northern and California sea lions, as well as provides habitat for river otters.

Secondary Role

The **secondary** role is to offer day use opportunities primarily for nature study and appreciation. Access to the park is by boat only, and the island has no docking facilities requiring boaters to anchor in the temporary calm-weather anchorages of Northwest Bay and Camp Bay. Due to the sensitive bird habitat, most of the island is closed to the public. Public access is limited to the beaches and a short trail that connects the two bays, which provides excellent viewing and photographing opportunities for flowering plants within the meadow and for seabirds through a viewing blind. A cabin located at Camp Bay provides a base for volunteer park hosts to provide information and education on appropriate behaviour on the island, during the summer months.

Other recreational opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts include ocean swimming, kayaking, fishing, and scuba diving by boat.

Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Lack of mapping of sensitive sites making it difficult to plan visitor and research use	➢ Inventory and map the park's ecosystems and rare elements.
Impact of adjacent activities (sport and	➢ Work with Department of National Defence and

commercial fishing and diving), overflights, and wildlife viewing activities including boating on sensitive bird colonies and fragile meadow	charter companies to limit overflights. ➢ Ensure charter operators adhere to developed wildlife viewing guidelines. ➢ Provide information encouraging park visitors to stay on trails and minimize their environmental impact. ➢ Close and sign former trail to Aspen Grove. ➢ Restrict the size of tour groups to 15 people. ➢ Provide information about sensitivity, fragile sites, hazards etc.
Fishery management	➢ Encourage DFO to eliminate bivalve harvest and monitor status of populations. ➢ Work with local groups to gain cooperation for voluntary sport fishing closure.
Encroachment of shore pine onto meadow	➢ Undertake an assessment on the role of fire in maintaining the ecosystem and reduce encroachment.
Lack of knowledge of cultural values	➢ Conduct a cultural inventory and traditional use study in conjunction with First Nations.

Zoning

Special Feature Zone – protects the breeding areas of the island, including the outlying rocks and islets, which represents 39 hectares or approximately 25% of the park. The objective of this zone is to protect and present significant natural or cultural values given their special character, fragility and heritage values.

Natural Environment Zone – covers the meadows, beaches and foreshore at Camp and Northwest Bay areas of the island, an area of 116 hectares or approximately 75% of the park. This zone includes many of the conservation values and the natural area that provides the backdrop for recreation. The objective of this zone is to protect scenic values and to provide recreational opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment.

Conservation

Representation - ecosection	☒	Mitlenatch Island Nature Park is one of 22 small protected areas contributing to the representation of the under-represented (5.4%) Strait of Georgia *Terrestrial* Ecosection (SOG). Mitlenatch makes a small contribution of 1% to the overall representation of this ecosection. It also makes a small contribution of 1.6% to the representation of the poorly-represented Strait of Georgia *Marine* Ecosection (SOG), which has only 0.9% of its total area protected.
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant	☒	Mitlenatch Island Nature Park is one of 73 small protected areas that contribute to CDFmm. CDFmm has less than 2.5% protected in the province and is the smallest forest subzone in BC with intensive urban and agricultural pressures. Although Mitlenatch's contribution to its representation is minimal (0.6%) it is important given the fragmented nature of this ecosystem and the limited opportunities available for its protection.
Special Features	☒	Rich intertidal zone; second largest seabird colony in the Strait of Georgia; concentrations of seals and sea lions on rocky reefs; outstanding flowering meadow with rare plants
Rare/Endangered Values	☒	*Red-listed* species: marbled murrelet, northern sea lion; Carolina meadow foxtail; winged water starwort. *Blue-listed* species: slimleaf onion; Nuttall's quillwort; tiny mousetail; chaffweed; seaside rein orchid. *Threatened* species: (COSEWIC listed) northern abalone.
Scientific/Research Opportunities	☒	Long-term research on seabird colonies, marine mammals, and rare plants

Recreation

Representation		
backcountry	☐	Not Applicable
destination	☒	Natural history destination
travel corridor	☐	Not Applicable
local recreation	☒	Wildlife viewing, sports fishing
Special Opportunities	☒	Nature appreciation, scuba diving
Education/Interpretation Opportunities	☒	Significant natural values

Cultural Heritage

Representation	☒	First Nation use (egg collecting and camas harvesting); post-contact, European history of cattle and sheep ranching by Manson family
Special Feature	☒	First Nation gathering site, fish weir in Camp Bay, rock mortar

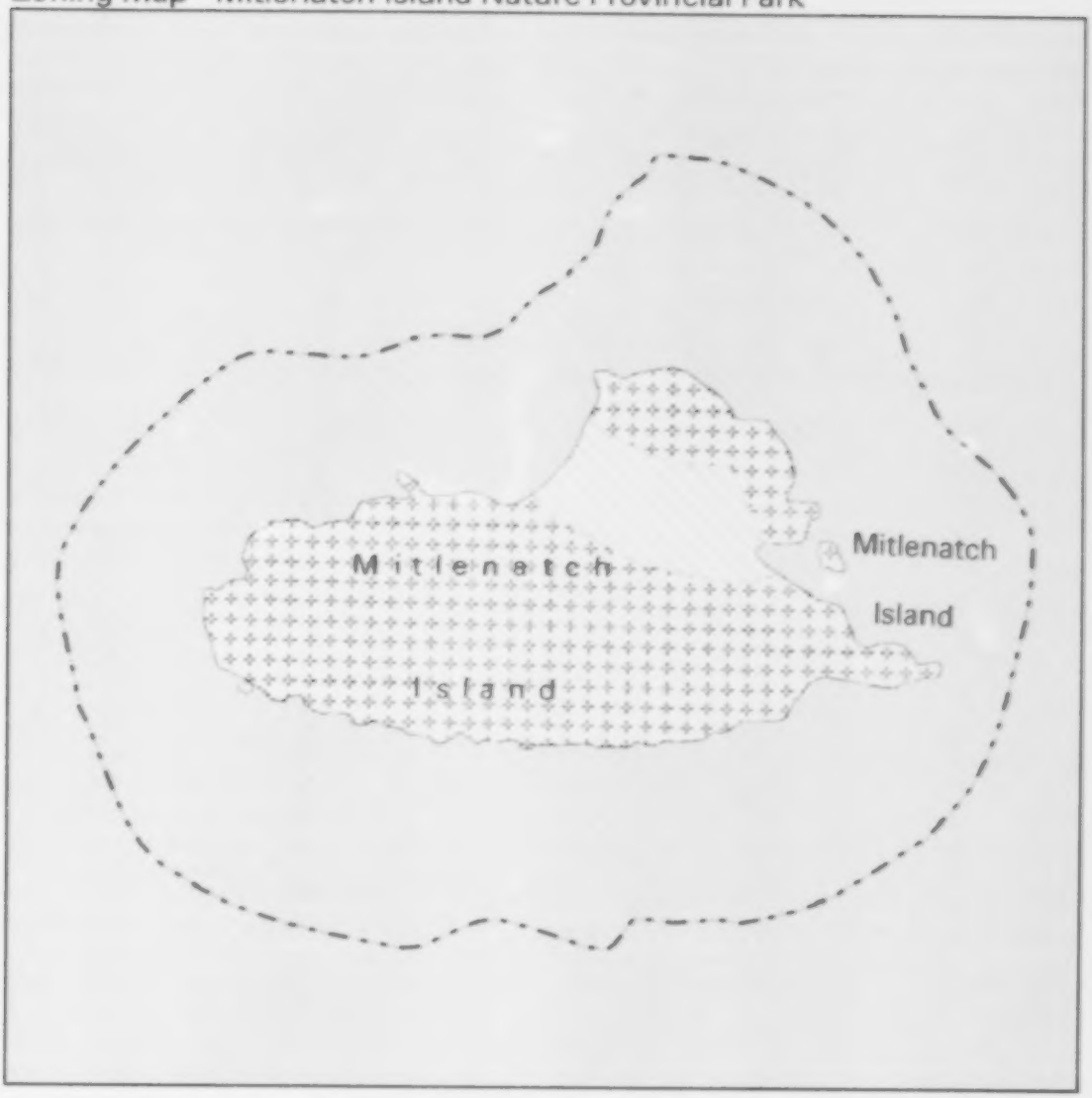
Other Management Considerations

Other Designations	☒	Important Bird Area (International program that identifies and supports the protection of lands having special bird habitats); Canadian Wildlife Service is considering including Mitlenatch as part of a larger marine conservation area proposal
Relationship to other PAs	☒	Part of a system of protected areas focused on bird breeding areas in coastal British Columbia
Co-operative Management Arrangements	☒	The area is a northern abalone reserve – harvesting has been prohibited since the early 1970s. Other fishery closures specific to this park: Commercial – Pacific oyster, anchovy, sea cucumber, octopus, perch, scallop, squid, green and red sea urchin Recreational – harvesting is prohibited for clams and oysters, voluntary no take of all marine life by scuba divers.
Partnerships	☒	Simon Fraser University / Canadian Wildlife Service use naturalist hut for research from March to September; Volunteer Host program
Vulnerability	☒	Sensitive ecosystems, seabird colonies and their breeding sites are vulnerable to adjacent activities (boating and commercial and sports fishing), overflights, human disturbance, and domesticated animals. Small size limits ability to protect CDFmm. Impact of recreational diving on fragile abalone stocks.
Relationship to other Strategies	☒	Marine Protected Areas Strategy

Area: 155 hectares (36 ha upland; 119 ha foreshore)

Date of establishment: July 14, 1961

Zoning Map - Mitlenatch Island Nature Provincial Park



Projection: Albers Equal Areas
Datum: NAD83

Natural Environment
Special Feature
Protected Area Boundary

0 100

Produced in Mar 2003 by
Ministry of Water, Land and Air
Protection by MSRM, Decision
Support Services

This is a visual representation
only and should not be used for
legal purposes.